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Subject: TAKING WING Awards Recipients for FY 2001

To: Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, and IITF Director

It is with great pleasure that we announce the 2001 TAKING WING Awards. We received nine nominations and all exhibited strong community and partner involvement, and each made significant contributions to the land, people, and migratory birds. All nominated projects spanned across real and imaginary boundaries to reach diverse groups of people and identify common interests. Many voices echoed through the descriptions of these projects signaling that we are indeed working hand-in-hand with partners and the public in the conservation of natural resources.

We thank the TAKING WING Awards Committee for reviewing the nominations and recommending award recipients. The committee, currently led by Jim Corven of the Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences, has facilitated partner review of award nominations for the past 8 years. This thorough partner review allows greater recognition of the Forest Service's role in wetland, waterfowl, shorebirds, and waterbird conservation. The partner involvement in this selection process greatly increases the prestige of these awards and the status of our work in the conservation community.

This year's awards celebration also recognizes the expanded TAKING WING program as it brings the strengths of the Forest Service Deputy Areas of State and Private Forestry, Research and Development, National Forest System and Office of International Programs into the spotlight. Each project receiving an award demonstrates the ability to work together to deliver effective land stewardship and integrated bird conservation. These types of intra-agency partnerships are the future strength of the Forest Service and our avenue for enhanced conservation and public service.

These awards will be presented Wednesday, April 3, 2002, at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Dallas, Texas. The ceremony will be in the Reunion Ballroom C of the Hyatt Regency and is scheduled to begin at 5:00 p.m., with a reception to follow.

Congratulations to the 2001 TAKING WING Awards recipients for a job well done! Project descriptions are included in the enclosure.

/s/ Dale N. Bosworth

DALE N. BOSWORTH
Chief

Enclosure



2001 TAKING WING AWARD RECIPIENTS

CATEGORY: Habitat

PROJECT: Red Slough

For almost a decade, the restoration of the Red Slough property in eastern Oklahoma has been a vision of many. In 1996, landowner Phillip Hogan began to make that vision a reality by enrolling 5,814 acres of agricultural lands in the Wetland Reserve Program. He also made it known to a variety of conservation agencies that he was no longer interested in owning this property and was looking for a buyer. In 1997, The Conservation Fund (TCF) secured a donation from the Richard King Mellon Foundation to acquire 3,855 acres. The Conservation Fund then transferred the ownership to the USDA Forest Service – Ouachita National Forest. This marked the beginning of some very complex and diverse partnerships, resulting in an extremely habitat rich wetland.

Today, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, Forest Service, and the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation share responsibility for restoration, enhancement, and day-to-day management of a project area that now encompasses over 7,000 acres. The Conservation Fund is working with willing sellers to expand the area and Ducks Unlimited continues to be an invaluable partner providing engineering design, contract administration, and financial support for restoration. Since the beginning of restoration activities, Red Slough has become increasingly important for numerous species of waterfowl and neotropical migrants, including wintering, migrating, and breeding species. The area is fast becoming a premier birding and waterfowl hunting location in Oklahoma. It is documented that waterfowl hunters have come from as far away as Minnesota, Missouri, and North Carolina, and bird watchers from as far away as Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, and Florida.

CATEGORY: Community Involvement

PROJECT: Licking River Wetland Restoration

For communities to become involved in national forest activities, Forest Service employees must be involved in the community. Dedicated staff from the Morehead Ranger District and the Daniel Boone National Forest are testimony to this statement. For more than a decade, Dave Manner, Tom Biebighauser, Evelyn Morgan, Richard Hunter, and George Morrison have actively participated in their community building support, trust, and respect. The Licking River Restoration Project provides a recent example of the positive relationship these people have with their community. During this project, over 350 volunteers participated in 23 separate work days towards the restoration of 125 acres in Menifee and Rowan Counties in Kentucky. More than 500 students from Eastern Kentucky University learned about the value of wetlands ecosystems through direct involvement in the restoration project. Three environmental workshops provided 59 teachers from Kentucky and Ohio with hands-on learning experiences to share with their students. One-hundred and fifty people attended the ceremony to dedicate the project in memory of Stephen “Moose” Morris, a life-long volunteer of Ducks Unlimited. Moose’s bronzed hunting boots remain in the area today as part of the interpretive information and reminding all who visit of his commitment to wetlands, waterfowl, and the Daniel Boone National Forest.

To complete this project, Forest Service funds were leverage 8.6 times. Partners included Ducks Unlimited, EPA – Five Star Wetland Program, The Steele-Reese Foundation, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Rowan County Wildlife Club, Wal-Mart Foundation, and Waterfowl Systems, Inc.

CATEGORY: Capacity Building

PROJECT: Spring Migration of Dunlin and Dowitchers along the Pacific Flyway

Over 50 individuals came together in 14 locations, from San Francisco Bay, CA, to Yukon-Kuskokowin Delta, Alaska, to pool their time and equipment with funding from 20 contributing offices, organizations, and agencies to collect much needed information on migrating shorebirds. The U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan recognizes research on shorebird migration as a top priority. Until this study, little was known about the northward migration strategy used by Pacific coast dunlin and nothing was known about how individual long-billed and short-billed dowitchers migrate along the Pacific Flyway.

Principal Investigators John Takekawa, USGS, Western Ecological Center; Nils Warnock, Point Reyes Bird Observatory; and Mary Anne Bishop, Prince William Sound Science Center coordinated this multi-agency project involving a variety of agency staff and volunteers. The Forest Service participated at the Stikine Delta, Juneau Wetland, and Yakutat Forelands on the Tongass National Forest, the Copper River Delta on the Chugach National Forest, and through the Copper River Delta Migratory Bird Initiative sponsored by the Office of International Programs, the Pacific Northwest Research Station, the Chugach National Forest, and Ducks Unlimited, Inc. – Western Regional Office. The project's reliance on multi-agency private and public cooperation provides an example of the most cost efficient and comprehensive method for studying large-scale migration of small shorebirds.

CATEGORY: Investigations

PROJECT: Western Boreal Forest Initiative

The Western Boreal Forest is a vast, and as yet, largely unspoiled region that is home to some 13 million breeding ducks and a myriad of other wildlife. Unfortunately, this remote and long-secure reservoir of waterfowl production that the conservation profession has largely taken for granted can be ignored no longer. Industrial activities, including oil and gas, forestry, mining, agriculture, hydroelectric and other development pressures are expanding at an increasing rate. The influence of these activities and the potential consequences of climate change on boreal wetland ecosystems remain largely unknown. In 1997, Ducks Unlimited Canada launched the Western Boreal Forest Initiative to take a good hard look at the factors affecting this immense landscape. Today, this initiative is bringing together industry, government, universities, foundations and other agencies to better understand these important wetlands and sustain their values and functions.

To date, this project has completed the mapping of eight million acres of land-cover classification and change detection across several decades in the MacKenzie River Valley. This is an area that may show the greatest level of global warming impacts. Change detection

revealed several areas where dry meadow habitats have changed to wet lacustrine sites. The digital products are now available to support natural resources management decisions. The USDA Forest Service Office of International Programs and the Alaska Region are involved in this effort through professional involvement and financial assistance. Partners include Ducks Unlimited, Inc., Pew Charitable Trusts, Canadian Wildlife Service, Northwest Territorial governments, and the Sahtu First Nations.

CATEGORY: Public Awareness

PROJECT: Lost River Riparian Restoration

Historically, there were extensive wetlands and rich riparian areas throughout Indiana. Wide river and stream bottoms once teemed with wildlife. As the state was settled, the floodplains were cleared, drained, and converted to agricultural farmland. Today, the Lost River, in southern Indiana, is a winding geologically significant river that meanders almost exclusively through row-cropped farmland. When these lands became available for purchase or exchange, the Hoosier National Forest and partners began providing leadership in promoting and demonstrating riparian values by restoring land to its pre-settlement condition. Acquiring the Roland and Moffatt tracts along the Lost River provided the Hoosier National Forest the opportunity to restore over a mile of river bottomland and introduce local citizens to the values of this ecosystem.

Through the collaboration of the Hoosier National Forest, Indiana Department of Natural Resources – Division of Fish and Wildlife, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Ducks Unlimited, Americorps, Monroe County YMCA and local schools, 165 acres now have most of the features and functions of a bottomland hardwood ecosystem. Wading birds, waterfowl, and amphibians have returned to the area and the local media responded by covering the story on the front page. Today, citizens and landowners in southern Indiana have working examples of riparian management and the Hoosier National Forest and partners can continue to provide leadership in promoting its values.

/s/ Dale N. Bosworth